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**CONSUMERS UNION PRAISES U.S. REP. HENRY HYDE (R-ILL.)  
FOR CALLING FOR PUBLIC SCRUTINY OF CABLE TV RATE INCREASES**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Consumers Union praised House Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde, R-Ill., today for calling for public scrutiny of recent increases in cable TV rates.

Consumers Union shares Chairman Hyde's concerns about the premature deregulation of the cable TV industry and skyrocketing rates.

"We appreciate Chairman Hyde's leadership and his honest assessment of the market failures that have left millions of consumers paying inflated prices for cable TV," said Gene Kimmelman, co-director of Consumers Union's Washington DC office.

In a letter to FCC Chairman William Kennard dated July 19, Hyde asked the agency to review the recent 10 percent cable rate increase for subscribers in the congressman's suburban Chicago district. AT&T -- the Chicago area's largest cable TV provider -- is raising monthly fees in its largest markets this summer 5 percent to 21 percent.

Hyde recalled how he had proposed extending cable rate regulation before it expired in March 1999, but he was met with "vehement opposition" from the cable industry, which promised "good behavior."

"I am now wondering if we made a mistake in letting regulation expire," Hyde wrote. "In spite of the reforms, and our efforts to promote competition, cable rates continue to rise, and I'm wondering why," he said in a press statement.

Kimmelman said he hoped Hyde's actions would lead to some relief for cable TV subscribers.

"As Chairman Hyde points out, the promise of competition has failed to materialize in the four years since the Telecommunications Reform Act became law," Kimmelman said. "We hope that Chairman Hyde's actions will lead Congress to re-open the issue of cable TV competition. We believe the seemingly never-ending rate increases that consumers pay for cable TV illustrates that it was wrong for Congress to deregulate the industry before real competition existed.

"We commend Chairman Hyde for his efforts to promote competition and spur public officials to use whatever tools they have to protect consumers from price gouging."

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